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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 186th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 18 March 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

1. Mr. JONAH (Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs), noting that in his new capacity he was responsible, inter alia, for matters relating to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, said that the United Nations had entered a period in which it would be increasingly able to act with the effectiveness envisaged by its founders. The end of the cold war, the growing trend towards democratization and self-determination of peoples, and the recognition that some problems were of a global scope, had made cooperation among United Nations Members more necessary and possible than ever before.

2. Since its inception, the Committee had sought to mobilize the United Nations system to promote the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and had, with the support of the Division for Palestinian Rights, successfully placed the question on the international agenda. The problem remained, however, one of the most enduring and difficult issues with which the international community had to contend. The peace process initiated in Madrid presented a historic opportunity to facilitate a comprehensive and peaceful settlement. The Committee could count on his full support in its future activities.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3. The agenda was adopted.

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1992 (A/AC.183/1992/CRP.1/Rev.1)

4. Mr. CAMILLERI (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing the Committee's draft programme of work for 1992 (A/AC.183/1992/CRP.1/Rev.1), said that section I of the document was procedural, summarizing the relevant resolutions adopted at the previous session of the General Assembly. Section II recommended as priority issues for 1992 the human rights violations in the occupied territory and the need for international protection of the Palestinians living there; the adverse impact of Israeli settlements on Palestinian rights and the achievement of peace; the deteriorating economic situation of the Palestinian people and the need for international development assistance in the occupied Palestinian territory; and the promotion of peace and the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations.

5. Section III dealt with activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. It was recommended in section III.A that the Committee should, while continuing its past activities, develop its role further, by holding consultations with interested Member States and following up on

(Mr. Camilleri, Malta)

political developments and on the situation in the occupied territory through ongoing contacts throughout the United Nations system. It was also recommended that the Committee should organize in-depth, single-theme meetings on each priority issue, attracting high-level participation that could be funded from the regular budget. In sections III.B and C, details were given of the regional seminars and NGO symposia sponsored by the Committee and of the 1992 NGO international meeting. With regard to the North American NGO Symposium (para. 16), he informed the Committee that the response to inquiries as to whether it could be held in Washington had not been positive and that it would therefore be held in New York. Section III.D of the draft programme of work concerned studies and publications undertaken or planned by the Division for Palestinian Rights. Section III.E urged the establishment of the computer-based information system as soon as possible. Lastly, section III.F proposed the same programme for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People as in 1991.

6. Since the draft programme of work had been the object of considerable consultations, he hoped that the Committee could proceed to adopt it.

7. Mr. JAIN (India) said that paragraph 16 of the draft programme of work needed revision because it referred to the possibility that the North American NGO Symposium might be held in Washington. He proposed that the revised text should, however, refer to the fact that such a possibility had been explored.

8. Mr. BUDAI (Hungary), referring to paragraph 7 of the draft programme of work, said that his delegation fully agreed with its thrust, including the reference to an international consensus on the essential principles for a solution to the question of Palestine. However, Hungary did not agree that, as stated in the last sentence, that consensus had been reaffirmed most recently in General Assembly resolution 46/75. The resolution in question had not been adopted unanimously but with many abstentions, including that of Hungary. He therefore proposed amending the final sentence, replacing the words "that consensus was" by the words "those essential principles were".

9. Mrs. KHOURY (Observer for Palestine) and Mr. ALARCON de QUESADA (Cuba) said that they would not object to such an amendment.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work in document A/AC.183/1992/CRP.1/Rev.1, as amended and on the understanding that it would be revised as proposed.

11. It was so decided.

REPORT ON THE UNITED NATIONS ASIAN SEMINAR AND NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE HELD IN NICOSIA FROM 20 TO 24 JANUARY 1992

12. The CHAIRMAN said that the United Nations Asian Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, held at Nicosia from 20 to 24 January 1992, had been attended by representatives of 22 countries, over 40 representatives of non-governmental organizations and 42 media representatives. A total of seven meetings had been held, and 20 eminent experts from Asia and the United States, as well as Palestinians and Israelis, had presented papers at three round tables on the following three topics: "A just settlement of the question of Palestine", "Safety and protection of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory" and "International and regional issues". Three workshops had been organized for the non-governmental organizations on the general theme of "Developing solidarity activities by Israeli and other organizations with Palestinian women, physicians, health workers and students".

13. The report on the Seminar and NGO Symposium would be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights. In addition, the conclusions and recommendations and the NGO Declaration would be annexed to the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

14. The deliberations of the Seminar and NGO Symposium had been marked by a sense of urgency and determination to work together to develop concrete ideas for the future. The discussions had been substantive and productive and had covered a wide range of topics, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the positions of the parties to the conflict and helping to identify important issues for further discussions.

15. The participants had welcomed the convening of the Peace Conference on the Middle East in Madrid on 30 October 1991 and the subsequent bilateral talks between the parties in Washington, and expressed their earnest hope that the talks would lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. They had noted that that process had the support of the parties concerned and that it was based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which had long been recognized as the cornerstone of a comprehensive settlement. They had stressed the need for an active role by the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Security Council in achieving a successful outcome of the peace process.

16. The participants had expressed grave concern at the continuing settlement activity and confiscation of land in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, which had come to pose an existential threat to the Palestinian community never experienced by previous generations. They had stressed the illegal nature of the settlements and the need for an immediate halt to settlement activity. They had also condemned the settlement of immigrants and Israeli citizens in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and urged the Security Council and other relevant international bodies to take appropriate measures to address that serious problem.

(The Chairman)

17. The participants had recognized that the intifadah was the expression of the national will of the Palestinian people and of its determination to remain on its land and to attain its inalienable national rights. They had reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to choose their own leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and voiced deep concern that, in its efforts to repress the intifadah, Israel continued to violate the fundamental rights of Palestinians, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of generally recognized norms of international law, as well as numerous United Nations resolutions.

18. In their final Declaration, the non-governmental organizations had noted with utmost concern Israel's continuous systematic policy of violating the rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories. They deplored and denounced the continuation of the Israeli occupation of all Palestinian and Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, and Israel's brutal measures against the Palestinians, including the current policy designed to dismember the West Bank by restricting movement of Palestinian individuals and goods through Jerusalem. They had condemned the conditions under which Palestinian prisoners were held in the administrative detention camps and the use of torture during the interrogation of prisoners, including women and children. They had also condemned the Israeli Government's policy of systematic expulsion of Palestinians from their national homeland as a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and affirmed Security Council resolution 726 (1992), which strongly condemned the decision of Israel to resume deportations of Palestinian civilians.

REPORT ON THE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE HELD IN NEW YORK ON 3 AND 4 FEBRUARY 1992.

19. Mr. ALARCON de QUESADA (Cuba), Vice-Chairman, said that the preparatory meeting for the Ninth United Nations North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine had been attended by all 12 member organizations of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC).

20. In consultation with the officers of the Committee, NACC had produced a provisional programme for the Symposium, which was contained in working paper No. 1, which he wished to recommend to the Committee for approval. The proposed programme sought to address the impact of the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territory by Israel, the question of the protection of the Palestinian people, the creation of a Palestinian State, and the development of effective strategies by concerned non-governmental organizations. The proposed theme of the Symposium was "Peace is the fruit of justice, 25 years of occupation - overcoming the obstacles, preparing the way for Palestine". The Committee was being requested to approve the names of the panelists and resource persons put forward now, on the understanding that, where necessary, additional names would be proposed at a later stage. The Division for Palestinian Rights would ascertain the availability of all the suggested

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

panelists and resource persons. In making their decision on the invitations, the officers of the Committee would take into account the fact that financial provision had been made for six invitees travelling at United Nations expense.

21. As in previous years, the Symposium would be held in New York, in view of the refusal of the United States Government to grant the necessary authorization for it to be held in Washington.

22. In 1992, NACC intended to continue producing its newly professionalized, bi-monthly newsletter "Connections" and to widen distribution to concerned non-governmental organizations. It would also broaden its "Fax Tree" urgent action network by widening the dissemination of information through participation in various computer bulletin board networks currently available in North America. It would continue to keep the entire international NGO community informed with timely and insightful analyses of the peace process through the "Peace Conference information project". Despite the general financial crisis in the region and elsewhere, it would also seek to stabilize the work of its office as an NGO information and resource centre.

23. At the preparatory meeting, the representative of Palestine had said that the Palestine Liberation Organization had welcomed the peace process and had agreed to Palestinian participation in the process. He had remarked that, in the view of the delegation of Palestine, the approval of the $10 billion loan guarantee without a tie to a halt in the settlement activities in the occupied territories would be a clear indication that the United States was not serious about progress towards a settlement of the Middle East question. Continuing, the representative of Palestine had said that the United Nations was the source of international legitimacy and that its resolutions, particularly those of the Security Council, were legally binding. The rights that had been achieved within the Organization had to be maintained and nothing achieved outside that framework should be used as a substitute. Furthermore, he had questioned the idea held by some that the question of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue was the Committee's central task; the Committee's mandate was, in fact, to work towards the realization and the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

24. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt working paper No. 1.

25. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

26. The CHAIRMAN said that the preparatory meeting for the International NGO Meeting and the European NGO Symposium would be held in Geneva from 30 to 31 March 1992. The delegation of the Committee would comprise himself, as head of delegation, the Rapporteur of the Committee and the Permanent Observer for Palestine.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.